REGISTER OF CLASSIFICATION DECISIONS

Date of entry in Register:	18 September 1998
Name of applicant/court:	Stephen Bell
Applicant to the Labelling Body:	Not Applicable
Title of Publication:	The Annotated Lolita
Other Known Titles:	The Annotated 'Lolita', Lolita
Director:	Not Applicable
Producer:	Not Applicable
Publisher:	Vintage Books
Author:	Vladimir Nabakov
Editor:	Alfred Appel, Jr
Format:	Book
Country of Origin:	USA
Language:	English

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Components of film originally examined:

Feature:	Not Applicable	Running time:
Trailers:		Running time:
		Total Running time:

Excision/Alteration: Not Applicable.

Reason(s) for Excision: Not Applicable

Classification Decision:

Unrestricted.

Display Conditions:

Not Applicable.

Descriptive Note:

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Not Applicable.

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Direction to issue a label has been given on Not Applicable.

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SUMMARY OF THE REASONS FOR DECISION:

The book *The Annotated Lolita* is classified as unrestricted. The main consideration in arriving at this classification is the book's central theme of a man's sexual obsession with a young girl, and the way in which the book deals with this theme.

The Annotated Lolita is a 544 page book consisting of Vladimir Nabokov's novel *Lolita*, extensive notes, essays and additional information by Alfred Appel, Jr., and an essay by Nabokov. The novel is an acknowledged classic of 20th century literature.

The novel revolves around the sexual obsession of the narrator, Humbert Humbert, for a girl, Lolita, who is 12 years old when they first meet. Humbert gains custody of Lolita and embarks on a coercive and abusive sexual relationship with her. The Classification Office has determined that despite this content, the book does not promote or support, or tend to promote or support, either the exploitation of children or young persons for sexual purposes, or sexual coercion. A clear distinction can be made between Humbert's views and behaviour, and the stance of the novel itself. The book does not exploit or sensationalise its subject matter. Its ultimate impact is tragic, with focus on the devastating consequences of Humbert's obsession for Lolita.

In addition to dealing with these matters, the book also describes the infliction of serious physical harm to a limited extent. It contains a farcical account of how Humbert murders another man who has 'stolen' Lolita from him.

Given the nature of the book's contents, the Classification Office has considered whether any injury to the public good would be likely to arise from the book's unrestricted availability. It has been determined that no such injury would be likely. Although the book is intended for, and is appropriate reading for, a mature audience, its dense and extremely complex nature renders it indigestible for young readers. It is felt that a reader with the maturity to read the book is likely to have the maturity to deal with its contents. Unlike a film, a book of dense text does not make a sudden and colourful impression on naive viewers, and this book requires a level of engagement with the text that would make it of little interest to children.

In addition, it is noted that the novel *Lolita* has been freely available in New Zealand for many years, and that the Classification Office is not aware of any evidence of injury to the public good arising from that availability.

The Classification Office classifies *The Annotated Lolita* as:

Unrestricted.

OFLC Ref: 9800555